

DC Bicycle Advisory Council Meeting

January 4, 2006

MINUTES

Members in Attendance

Amy Nevel
Conrad Smith
Liam Healy
Dan Barry
Randall Myers
Hugh Morris
Jim Sebastian
Lyn Stoesen
Julie Eisenhardt
Ellen Jones
Jeanie Osburn
Lt. Byron Hope

Approval of November Minutes

The chair, Amy Nevel, called the meeting to order and asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. The minutes were approved with one change: Randall Myers lives in Ward 5, but is an At-Large member of the Council.

Recreational Trails Program

Chris Holben, of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), then gave a presentation on the Recreational Trails Program. The Recreational Trails Program is an assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). It provides funds to the District (and all states) to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The DC program is administered by DDOT and the DC Department of Parks and Recreation. At this time, the District does not have any motorized trails.

A Recreational Trail Advisory Committee assists with the program. It is a citizen committee whose members are appointed by the Mayor; however, you can nominate yourself. The committee must meet at least once per year, and at least one member must be a motorized trail user. Currently, a Segway user fulfills this role. Members select projects to be included in DDOT's annual budget.

Eligible projects include construction of new trails and trail linkages, land acquisition, trail maintenance (including the purchase of trail maintenance equipment), trail promotion (maps, brochures, etc.), educational programs that promote safety and environmental protection related to trails.

At the conclusion of Mr. Holben's presentation, Liam Healy suggested the BAC should develop a bicycle project wish list. This could serve as a resource for future project ideas. Ms. Jones emphasized that ideas should be well thought out before they are proposed. And, that a great majority of land in DC is owned by federal agencies that often don't want to use it for trails. So, while there is an abundance of money, there is a shortage of land.

Lewis Vann had a question about trail user etiquette. He is a frequent user of the Capital Crescent Trail and noted that there are many types of users – walkers, joggers, bicyclists, in-line skaters, strollers – especially on the weekends. He is concerned about liability in the event of a crash. He also asked if the BAC has a representative available to provide counsel or expert representation. Ms. Nevel responded that the BAC's charter does not designate these roles. She suggested two courses of action: 1) bring the issue to the recreational trails committee; or 2) discuss it at a BAC safety committee meeting. Jim Sebastian added that Lewis should check with the two agencies that have jurisdiction over the trail, the National Park Service and Montgomery County, MD. Also, the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (www.cctrail.org) may have researched this topic already.

Committee Reports

Facilities

Ellen Jones, committee chair, summarized the joint facilities committee/recreational trails committee meeting. Chris Holben (DDOT) briefly described the scope of the DC Recreational Trails program and gave updates on various funded projects. David Cranor presented a trail idea for the Palisades neighborhood that would utilize an abandoned trolley right-of-way running more or less along MacArthur Boulevard. They also spent a substantial portion of the meeting brainstorming on ways to promote the proposed DC Velodrome. Please see committee notes for more detail.

After the summary, Ms. Jones announced that the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) is partnering with the DC Office of Planning, DC Dept. Parks & Recreation, and the National Park Service to do a comprehensive parks and open spaces framework plan in the District. The effort will be looking at local recreational needs and connecting green spaces in DC. Both the BAC and Recreational Trails Advisory Committee are on their stakeholders' list. They will be ready to meet with the BAC early this year.

Legislative

The legislative committee did not meet.

Safety, Education, and Enforcement

This committee also did not meet. Julie Eisenhardt asked the Council for a volunteer to replace her as committee chair since she will be out of the country for the next couple of meetings. There were no volunteers at this time.

Project Updates

Mr. Sebastian updated the council on the status of current and future projects. Two projects received the most explanation:

Street Smart

The regional Street Smart safety campaign will be developing new bus and bus shelter ads, posters, and radio ads for March and April. This year there will be more Spanish language ads due to the Hispanic population's overrepresentation in crashes. Street Smart also has an enforcement component. Area police departments will be involved. WABA will be receiving more funding for Street Smart for Kids.

Automated Bike Rental

This service will be provided as free-of-charge to the city as part of the bus shelter contract. Design will take place this year with a hopeful program launch next year.

Jim Sebastian then gave brief updates on other projects. Please see project update list for more details.

Questions

Randall Myers asked if the grounds of the Soldiers and Airmen's Home would be opening up to the public. Chris Holben and Lyn Stoesen, who live nearby, said only the edge by Park Place will be changing and may only be open to the military. Mr. Myers also suggested that the BAC keep Walter Reed on the radar screen for when it opens up.

Ms. Jones requested an annual report with some benchmarks to evaluate the progress of the bicycle program. Mr. Sebastian said that DDOT has an annual report that includes bicycle and pedestrian components. Eric Gilliland (WABA) asked about the status of O St & South Capitol St intersection safety improvements. Amy Nevel requested a paragraph for each funding stream utilized by the bicycle program (e.g. CMAQ) and what it is generally spent on. She also asked if the bike program is given a certain amount of money for certain projects or if it can be used for many different things.

Advocacy

Ms. Jones stressed that Council members need to get involved within their wards. Mr. Sebastian emphasized the point by saying that community opposition to some bicycle and pedestrian improvements is strong and DDOT needs to have supporters to move these projects forward. Over the long run it will make a difference. Those who plan and implement projects (i.e. consultants, planners, engineers, project managers, etc.) do take notice and accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in projects. But, your voice must be heard. Eric Gilliland added that members should be informing their council members about what is going on in their wards and telling them their concerns.

Enforcement Errors Involving Bicyclists

Mr. Sebastian discussed an educational tool developed by DDOT for training MPD officers on common enforcement errors involving bicyclists. The tool is a two-page sheet containing a description and diagram of a motor vehicle/bicycle crash, followed by the improper police response and the relevant section of the DC Municipal Regulations explaining why that response was incorrect. Jeanie Osburn asked Lieutenant Byron Hope what recourse bicyclists have if they are wrongly charged. He responded that they must go to traffic adjudication and try to convince the judge. However, he would also like bicyclists to contact him so he can address the problem.

directly with the officer. In order to decrease police enforcement errors, he will be incorporating this tool in the yearly officer in-service training. For the next training session, he would like the sheet to list fines. Liam Healy asked Jim Sebastian about other police forces in DC, like NPS and National Capitol Police. Jim responded that he is only beginning with the MPD. Ellen Jones suggested that this sheet should be sent to AAA. Another member suggested sending it to Dr. Gridlock in the Washington Post, as well. Dan Barry suggested that DDOT should also prepare a sheet where the bicyclist is at fault. If one is created, Lieutenant Hope would like to add the prohibition of bicycling on sidewalks in the central business district.

Updates

Liam Healy briefed the group on a December meeting regarding the rehabilitation and upgrading of the 11th St bridge. The plan calls for the construction of two sets of bridges – one for express traffic, and the other for local traffic. The goals of the project include reducing neighborhood cut-through traffic, improving traffic flow, enhancing safety, and improving the connections between interstates 295 and 395. He commented that there were a number of bicyclists at the meeting, all of whom were concerned about the proposed closure of the bridge to cyclists during the construction phase. There will be more meetings on the project in May. Liam is going to ask Gary Rovey, the consultant, to give a presentation to the BAC at the upcoming March meeting.

National Bike Summit

The League of American bicyclists annual conference for bicycle advocates will be held in the District this March 1 to 3. Dan Tangherlini will speak at the 8 am Monday morning opening plenary session. In addition, the League is putting together a reception for winners of the Bicycle Friendly Communities award at the Wilson Building. This will probably take place on Wednesday, March 1 around 7 pm. She suggested that the BAC should move its meeting to the Wilson Building that evening. Members could invite their City Council members and/or staff to the reception and the BAC meeting. Ms. Jones or another volunteer will draft a sample letter to send to council members.

Adventure Cycling

Adventure Cycling Association would like to hold an event in Washington, possibly May 1 or 2, and is searching for a keynote speaker. They would like a local person who is versed in bike touring and is a dynamic speaker.

List serve

Eric Gilliland announced that WABA will be holding a bike rodeo next weekend at the Health and Fitness fair at the DC Convention Center. They will also be hosting their 33rd Annual Gala and Auction on Saturday February 11 at the Embassy of Finland. There will be a National Bike Summit Caucus Bike Ride on Friday night, March 3.

Ms. Nevel called for a motion to adjourn at 7:55 pm. All were in favor.